

THE BIBLE PORTRAYS DEATH AS A STATE OF SLEEP!

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NOTE: - All Bible texts are taken from the King James Version; and the compiler has supplied all emphasis throughout this Study Document.

● Throughout both Testaments of the Holy Scriptures, the Bible writers have consistently portrayed death as being a state of unconscious sleep. This teaching is repeated over and over again in the Scriptures. Let us look at the Biblical evidence to clearly establish this truth in our minds.

GOD'S EQUATION FOR HUMAN EXISTENCE: -

- It would be wise to briefly examine from the outset the necessary qualities that we all need to have to be living beings. The following Divine equation for human life has been laid down by our Creator from the very beginning of human existence.
Genesis 2:7: - "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

● We can see from the above verse concerning God's creation of the first man, that it contains the following equation for human existence: -

A body that is formed from the dust of the ground + God's imparting of the breath of life = A Living Soul.

- Throughout the Scriptures we find that our life, our very existence as a living soul is **TOTALLY DEPENDENT** upon God's impartation of the breath or spirit of life.

Job 27:3: - "All the while my breath *is* in me, and * **the spirit of God *is* in my nostrils.**"

NB: - * The margin has "that is, the breath which God gave him".

Job 33:4: - "The Spirit of God hath made me, **and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.**"

Isaiah 42:5: - "**Thus saith God the LORD**, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; **he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein.**"

Acts 17:24 & 25: - "**God that made the world and all things therein**, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, **seeing he giveth to all life, and breath**, and all things."

Acts 17:28: - "**For in him we live, and move, and have our being;** as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."

- The soul or life of every living thing and the breath of all humanity is in the hand or power of the Lord.
Job 12:9 & 10: - "Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of **the LORD** hath wrought this? **In whose hand *is* the *soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.**"
NB: - * The margin has "Or, life".

- When God takes away the breath or spirit of life, we die and turn to dust again.
Job 34:14 & 15: - “If he set his heart upon man, **if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.**”

Psalms 104:29 & 30: - “Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: **thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.**”

Ecclesiastes 12:7: - “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

NB: - The spirit that Solomon is referring to as returning to God who gave it when a person dies, is obviously the breath or spirit of life.

- God decreed that because of Adam’s sin, he would turn to dust again.
Genesis 3:19: - “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, **till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou [art], and unto dust shalt thou return.**”

- Job during his affliction wondered aloud why he did not die at birth, for if he had done so, then he would lie still and sleep and be at rest.
Job 3:11-13: - “**Why died I not from the womb?** [why] did I [not] give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck? **For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest.**”

The righteous man Job recognized that death was a state of sleep in the dust of the earth, until the time comes when man was to be awakened from his sleep, when the present heavens are no more.

Job 7:21: - “And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? **for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I [shall] not [be].**”

Job 14:12-14: - “**So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens [be] no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.** O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! **If a man die, shall he live [again]? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.**”

- The Psalmist has likened death to a state of sleep.
Psalms 13:3: - “Consider [and] hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, **lest I sleep the [sleep of] death.**”

- The prophet Daniel records the fact that the dead sleep in the dust of the earth, from which state they will be awakened to receive their eternal rewards.
Daniel 12:2: - “**And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,** some to everlasting life, and some to shame [and] everlasting contempt.”

THE BIBLE WRITERS HAVE RECORDED THE TRUTH THAT THE DEAD SLEEP WITH THEIR FATHERS: -

- The Lord himself told Moses that he was to sleep with his fathers.
Deuteronomy 31:16: - “**And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers;** and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go [to be] among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them.”

- Concerning the kings of Israel and Judah, we find it repeatedly stated that they slept with their fathers and were buried. Clearly, the verb **“slept”** is being used as a figure of speech to describe their deaths.

The Lord through his prophet Nathan predicted that when king David had fulfilled his days (that is, when he had come to the end of his life), he would sleep with his fathers.

2 Samuel 7:12: - **“And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.”**

Finally the above prediction from the Lord concerning king David was fulfilled and he died and slept with his fathers.

1 Kings 2:10: - **“So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.”**

1 Kings 11:21: - **“And when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the captain of the host was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to mine own country.”**

Concerning king David, the inspired apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost in the Book of Acts, approximately 1, 000 years after David’s death and burial, preached while being full of the Holy Spirit, that David **was still** dead and buried, and had not ascended up to heaven.

Acts 2:29 & 34 & 35: - “Men [and] brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch **David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. ... For David is not ascended into the heavens:** but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool.”

In fact, the inspired apostle Paul preached that David after having served his own generation fell upon sleep, and saw corruption.

Acts 13:36: - **“For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption.”**

- We have the following other examples concerning the kings of Israel and Judah dying and sleeping with their fathers.

1 Kings 11:43: - **“And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.”**

1 Kings 14:20: - **“And the days which Jeroboam reigned [were] two and twenty years: and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his stead.”**

1 Kings 14:31: - **“And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And his mother’s name [was] Naamah an Ammonitess. And Abijam his son reigned in his stead.”**

1 Kings 15:8: - **“And Abijam slept with his fathers; and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead.”**

1 Kings 15:24: - **“And Asa slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead.”**

1 Kings 16:6: - **“So Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah: and Elah his son reigned in his stead.”**

1 Kings 16:28: - **“So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria: and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.”**

1 Kings 22:40: - **“So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.”**

1 Kings 22:50: - **“And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.”**

2 Kings 8:24: - **“And Joram slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.”**

2 Kings 10:35: - **“And Jehu slept with his fathers: and they buried him in Samaria. And Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead.”**

2 Kings 13:9: - **“And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his stead.”**

2 Kings 13:13: - **“And Joash slept with his fathers; and Jeroboam sat upon his throne: and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.”**

2 Kings 14:16: - **“And Jehoash slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; and Jeroboam his son reigned in his stead.”**

2 Kings 14:22: - **“He built Elath, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers.”**

2 Kings 14:29: - **“And Jeroboam slept with his fathers, [even] with the kings of Israel; and Zachariah his son reigned in his stead.”**

2 Kings 15:7: - **“So Azariah slept with his fathers; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.”**

2 Kings 15:22: - **“And Menahem slept with his fathers; and Pekahiah his son reigned in his stead.”**

2 Kings 15:38: - **“And Jotham slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.”**

2 Kings 16:20: - **“And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.”**

2 Kings 20:21: - **“And Hezekiah slept with his fathers: and Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.”**

2 Kings 21:18: - **“And Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.”**

2 Kings 24:6: - **“So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.”**

● Many more references could be produced from the Book of 2nd Chronicles testifying to this same truth, but because these references are merely repeating the previous references from the Books of Kings we shall not list them here.

See also: - 2 Chronicles 9:31; 12:16; 14:1; 16:13; 21:1; 26:2 & 23; 27:9; 28:27; 32:33; 33:20.

THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS RECORD PEOPLE AS BEING ASLEEP IN DEATH: -

- Jesus is recorded as describing two dead people who he later brought back to life, as being asleep. Jairus' daughter and Lazarus are both described by Jesus as being asleep, while they were dead.

Luke 8:49-56: - "While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's [house], saying to him, **Thy daughter is dead**; trouble not the Master. But when Jesus heard [it], he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, **Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.** And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. **And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway:** and he commanded to give her meat. And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done."

John 11:11-14: - "These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, **Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.** Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. **Howbeit Jesus spake of his death:** but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. **Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.**"

- At the time of Jesus' resurrection, many of the saints who were sleeping arose from their graves, and appeared to many within the city of Jerusalem.

Matthew 27:51-53: - "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; **and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.**"

- The faithful deacon Stephen who was the first recorded Christian martyr was stoned to death, and Luke the writer of the Book of Acts records the simple truth that he fell asleep.

Acts 7:59 & 60: - "**And they stoned Stephen**, calling upon [God], and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. **And when he had said this, he fell asleep.**"

- Paul in his counsel on marriage in his 1st epistle to the Corinthians, states the principle that a wife is bound by the law of marriage as long as her husband is alive; but she is free to remarry if her husband is dead (that is, if he has fallen asleep).

1 Corinthians 7:39: - "**The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead**, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."

NB: - The Greek verb that is translated in the KJV as "*be dead*" is the word κοιμα/ω – "koimao" – See Strong's Concordance; Greek, No. 2837. It is defined as: - "sleep, fall asleep. 1. literally 2. figuratively of the sleep of death."¹ The phrase that is translated in the KJV as "**but if her husband be dead**", literally reads as "**but if her husband has fallen asleep**", thus contrasting clearly the husband being alive in the first half of this verse, with the husband being asleep or dead in the second part of this verse.

- Paul warned the Corinthians that because many professed believers had partaken of the Lord's Supper unworthily, many were sick and sleeping (that is, they were dead).

1 Corinthians 11:28-30: - "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of [that] bread, and drink of [that] cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. **For this cause many [are] weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.**"

¹ A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, by W. Bauer. Translated and revised by W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker; page 437.

- Paul teaches us that Christ's resurrection from the dead is the foundation upon which the resurrection of the righteous dead is based upon; he refers to those who are dead in Christ as having fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:12-18: - "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: **And if Christ be not risen, then [is] our preaching vain, and your faith [is] also vain.** Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: **And if Christ be not raised, your faith [is] vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.**"

1 Corinthians 15:20-23: - "**But now is Christ risen from the dead, [and] become the firstfruits of them that slept.** For since by man [came] death, by man [came] also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. **But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.**"

- Paul records the truth that of the more than 500 brethren who had seen Jesus all at the same time after his resurrection, some of them had fallen asleep by the time he wrote his 1st epistle to the Corinthians.
1 Corinthians 15:6: - "After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, **but some are fallen asleep.**"
- The apostle Peter referring to the last day mockers and scoffers, records the same truth as the Old Testament writers, that the fathers have fallen asleep, that is that they have died.
2 Peter 3:3 & 4: - "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? **for since the fathers fell asleep,** all things continue as [they were] from the beginning of the creation."

THE DEAD IN CHRIST ARE ASLEEP UNTIL THE 2ND COMING OF JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST WHEN THEY SHALL BE AWAKENED FROM THEIR SLEEP: -

- The apostle Paul has made it abundantly plain that the dead in Christ are asleep until the time of the "*last trump*" and the 2nd Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when the dead saints shall be awoken from their sleep and be clothed with incorruption and immortality.

1 Corinthians 15:50-55: - "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. **Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal [must] put on immortality.** So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where [is] thy sting? O grave, where [is] thy victory?"

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: - "**But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. **For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.** Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

- The Psalmist will be satisfied when he awakes with God's likeness, which the apostle Paul informs us is at the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ, when our present mortal and corruptible bodies shall be made like to Christ's glorious body.
Psalms 17:15: - "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: **I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.**"

Philippians 3:20 & 21: - "For our conversation is in heaven; **from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body,** according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

THE SLEEP OF DEATH IS AN UNCONSCIOUS STATE: -

- Lest some Christians claim that while they may accept the repeated statements of the Scriptures that liken death to a state of sleep, they would still cling to the popular tradition that the dead have a conscious existence in the grave, the following Scriptures make it clear, **that death is a state of unconscious sleep.**
Psalms 115:17: - "**The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.**"

Psalms 146:3 & 4: - "Put not your trust in princes, [nor] in the son of man, in whom [there is] no help. **His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.**"

Ecclesiastes 9:5 & 6 & 10: - "For the living know that they shall die: **but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any [thing] that is done under the sun. ... Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do [it] with thy might; for [there is] no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.**"

● Death therefore is not to be feared as it is merely a state of sleep; but rather, it is the future Judgment and which one of the two resurrections a person will be raised up in to receive their eternal reward, that is the essential point to concentrate our minds and energies upon.

John 5:28 & 29: - "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

Hebrews 9:27: - "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."